1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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chiefs and district headmen, were in undifferentiated charge of people. With the formal introduction of Native Courts came provision for the systematic review of judicial decisions by the Administration. To do this some kind of written record was necessary. Many chiefs could not write and court clerks had to be appointed. At the same time the posts of councillor and assessor were created, the former to assist the chief in his executive and legislative capacity as a Native Authority, the latter to help him in his judicial capacity and to constitute with him the Native Court. Messengers[19] were employed to preserve order in court, serve summonses, make arrests and restrain the violent. Under the Ordinances, the Native Authority has power to make rules and orders on a variety of subjects, subject to confirmation by the Administration. The Native Courts are competent to enforce these rules and orders, as well as to administer 'tribal law' and certain items of Administrative legislation delegated to them. They can impose fines or sentences of imprisonment or whipping. In civil cases they can award damages, and charge a hearing fee, but the Ngoni do not distinguish between the fee and a fine.

In 1938 an Ngoni Native Treasury was established and a treasury clerk appointed to run it. After a few years the Administration transferred a larger share of general revenue to the Native Treasury and increased the activities for which the Native Authority was responsible. At one time much of the finance of the Ngoni Native Authority School, opened in 1938, was handled by the Native Treasury, though this was largely a matter of book-keeping. The Native Authority assumed responsibility for the construction and maintenance of roads through the reserves, the care of wells and dams constructed by the Administration, and the provision of messengers to act as police at the lorry-checking points on the main roads. More recently it has become responsible for ghee production, for a demonstration farm and for a nursery of fruit trees. It has had to arrange finance for new school buildings and county granaries and to build these by direct labour. To handle the money for these enterprises there has been a treasury clerk and, recently, an assistant who also helps with the collection of Native tax. The Native Treasury acts as accountant for all these activities but the extent to which the Administration, in one guise or another, directs their carrying out varies considerably.

The revenue for the Treasury is derived from a share in the Native tax, from the sale of licences for dogs, bicycles, arms,

[19] Usually known by the vernacular term *kapau* in distinction to the district messengers employed directly by the Administration.

1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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these need the support and co-operation of the African community. The Administration has consulted Ngoni and other Native Authorities on such matters as agricultural control, the emigration of women to the railway line, provision of better schools, and so on. In 1948 the number of councillor posts was reduced. Instead of employing councillors for general duties, each of the four councillors remaining, now receiving a much higher salary than before, has been given a specific task, the care of roads, the promotion of agriculture, the efficient use of school facilities, and the co-ordination of the work of the Native Authority as a whole. The Administration has attempted to make these four councillors, together with the ten Northern Rhodesian chiefs, into a formal council competent to take decisions without always referring to the people as a whole.

So far this attempt has not been very successful, but the power of the four councillors is certainly greater than that of their more numerous and lower-paid predecessors. The court clerks have been overshadowed by these new men and left behind in these new activities. Literacy is becoming common and clerks are no longer in demand as secretaries to chiefs. The Native Authority is beginning to employ men whose jobs do not take them to court at all.

The present range of posts whose emoluments are handled by the Native Treasury is shown in Table VIII.[1]

All these posts are filled by the Native Authority in agreement with the Administration. It is easy to show how a large proportion of the employees are connected to the chiefs and senior lieutenants by kinship, but this fact is not as significant as it might appear. The Ngoni possess nowadays what may be called an omni-directional kinship system in which ties of kinship can be traced as convenient through fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, and by any combination of these. It would indeed be surprising if Native Authority employees could not trace genealogical connexion with chiefs and their lieutenants, for so can nearly everyone in Ngoniland. There is no formal selection procedure but a chief may announce at a county meeting that there is a post to be filled and those present may suggest names. Alternatively a chief may discuss the matter with his advisers and then offer the post to the man they decide on. Occasionally a man seeking employment approaches the Paramount Chief in the hope that there may be a post to be filled. Thus although those who live near the chief, or who make it their business to see him and drink with him frequently stand a greater change of being chosen, choice is not restricted to these people.

[1] [see page 152, category 116. – Analyst]

[Text continues on page 153]

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

There were musicians and craftsmen there, as at Enkodlweni. All the senior Ngoni men knew Ngoni history, used proverbs in the courts and in conversation, and two or three senior men knew and carried out the ritual of the ancestor cult. The new element in this village was due to economic influences rather than missionary and educational. Most of the men had learned to read and write Nyanja while away at work, but no one knew more than a few words of English, and only one or two of the leading men, and no women, spoke Ngoni.

The men of the leading Ngoni families formed a closely knit group for purposes of village affairs, social life and ritual performances. There was a group of senior Ngoni women who exerted a powerful influence in all matters concerned with household life and the bringing up of children. But out of a total of one hundred and twenty-one households, only thirty-seven belonged to men of Ngoni clans, and there were only thirty-two women of Ngoni clans including both the older and the younger groups of women. The aristocratic group here was small in comparison with Enkodlweni, but the influence of their ways of living was proportionately much stronger. The Ngoni men and women of leading families were very conscious of their cultural distinction and also of their relatively small numbers, and many were the complaints about 'those other people who are spoiling our land'.

Political and social changes

When the British took over the administration of Nyasaland between 1891 and 1901, the Ngoni kingdoms received no special recognition. Their chiefs, called by the administration principal village headmen, and their heads of clans called village headmen, were relegated to the same position *vis-à-vis* the administration as the local peoples. Part of the Central Ngoni kingdom was cut off from the rest by the treaty demarcating the Nyasaland boundary from Portuguese East African.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

not understand how Europeans could draw such a sharp line and equate ignorance with the absence of a literature and written traditions. When talking about how they instructed their young people in the traditional knowledge about the natural world and their own national law and history, they pointed out that there were no set periods for this kind of teaching, but that there was a recognition that the young man, before or about the time when he himself became a father, should know what his father knew. We will begin then with some indication of the kind of matters included in this traditional store of knowledge, recognizing that reference can be made only to a small selection from it. We will go on in the second half of the chapter to the other kind of knowledge which was inseparably connected with practical and technical skills.

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Ngoni traditional knowledge: the reckoning of time

The Ngoni had a system of reckoning time and a recognized calendar. This consisted of thirteen lunar months in the year, reckoned from the first appearance of each new moon, and beginning with our December as the first month. The names of the months are all related to natural events, and these as the following list shows were in five main groups: when certain wild animals had their young; the time of bitter cold and frosts; when the hawks came to catch chickens; when certain trees fruited; when the new crops were ripe and the former first fruit ceremony took place.

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NGONI NAMES FOR MONTHS

1 *Impala*	Antelopes have their young
2 *Inkakasi*	Gnu have their young
3 *Impuzo*	Tasting new crops
4 *Inyati*	Buffaloes have their young
5 *Indlovu*	Elephants have their young
6 *Ilizu elimnyama*	Beginning of cold weather
7 *Ilizu elikulu*	Great cold weather

8: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5

The Fort Jameson Ngoni[3] are at this stage of transition. Many men and some women can read, if not write, and we can no longer call the tribe non-literate. Yet a society of this kind behaves in many ways as if it were non-literate. In particular, information about the past is transmitted orally and laws and customs are not committed to writing. In this paper I shall discuss some of the ways in which this information is manipulated. I shall distinguish between tales of fighting, relating to the period 1821–1898, which we may regard as tribal legends of origin; beliefs about customary behaviour relating to the same period; private legends which serve to explain the form of relations between present-day groups; and lastly history proper, documents describing contemporary events, if such exist.

Early travellers all speak of the various Ngoni groups as fierce warrior tribes interested only in destruction and plunder. With the spread of European control Ngoni raids ceased. Today in villages inhabited mainly by women and children, with scraggy animals and eroded gardens, the traveller looking for signs of a military tradition sees only khaki greatcoats and battle-dress. Among the Fort Jameson group, if not elsewhere, the great cowhide shields, and the regiments which carried them, have disappeared. Yet the battles of the past are still remembered and are called to mind in songs sung at drunken parties, in tales told to children and, importunately, to sympathetic strangers. Many of these songs are in the old Ngoni language now largely forgotten, and singers cannot give any precise meaning to the songs they sing. They are the relics of the past learnt parrot-fashion and in the context in which they are sung they do not require any specific reference. In our own culture we do not need to know who were the April rainers before we can sing "Green grow the rushes, O". Prose tales, however, are in ordinary speech and describe military exploits of people known to the speaker, or preparations for raiding ordered by the Paramount Chief and carried out by his lieutenants. The most frequently recounted battle of all is the fight between Ngoni and British troops in 1898. Many men and women are still alive who remember the fighting or even took part in it. The cataclysmic changes which followed the Ngoni defeat and the unusual weapons used combine to make the battle memorable. It is the only admitted defeat, for all other tales tell only of victory. The Ngoni defeated the Bemba, Wisa, Cewa, Kunda, and so on.

We know from contemporary travellers' accounts that though on the whole the Ngoni were successful against their neighbours, their run of successes was not unbroken. There is evidence that on occasion even the Cewa raided the Ngoni and took captives. We may regard the form taken by these legends as due in part to the process found in most cultures by which victories are remembered and defeats forgotten. But the distortion introduced is not only the elimination of defeat. The Administration and the Missions have,

3. I worked among these people during 1946–49 while on the staff of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute.

8: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5

is now a subject taught in the primary schools. All these are based on the recollections of old Ngoni men and women more than on contemporary documents, of which there are very few. We must therefore regard them as written legends rather than proper histories. Differences between one version and another are sometimes related to the different political affiliations of those providing the information.[6] The period from 1821 to 1898 is treated in detail and the remaining fifty years dismissed in a few lines. It seems likely therefore that in time the tribal legend will be ossified, or that at least there will be one version widely known. Yet the vernacular texts are written in the school language (Nyanja) which is not yet the ordinary village speech (Nsenga), and are learned largely parrot-fashion, sometimes even with unintelligible words included. It remains to be seen how much of what is learnt under these conditions is carried over into life outside the classroom.

With the increasing documentation of modern life we might well hope that the period of legend alone will end and Ngoni history proper will begin. Unfortunately this is not so. Although it is fairly easy to find out from contemporary documents what went on in tribal affairs from 1890 to 1898, with the imposition of British rule a curtain descended. Official reports grow shorter and shorter with the years for there was less and less to record. Towards the end of the British South Africa Company's rule the published information on Ngoni life was little more than the annual statement, covering the whole of Northern Rhodesia, that "the conduct of the natives has been satisfactory". From the beginning of Colonial Office control in 1924 reports have lengthened, but these have dealt with the history not of the Ngoni tribe but of the Eastern Province and of Northern Rhodesia. These larger regions have become the significant units of government, not individual tribes and chiefdoms. The Fort Jameson Ngoni have become more and more closely integrated with the wider society and less and less have any history of their own. When the Ngoni were making history they lacked means to record it; now that means are available they have no history to record.

Thus we see that in this transitional society internal and external relations, as well as the level of technical skill, influence both the way in which people relate themselves to their past and also the timing and content of their written history.

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6. Read and Wilson have pointed out that informants from Northern Nyasaland assert that their Paramount Chief is the heir of Zwangendaba, while those from Fort Jameson say that their Chief is the heir. Cf. Read, *Tradition and Prestige*, p. 267, and Wilson, *Outline History*, p. 19.